

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION USBERLIN UNN

USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BERLIN 7223

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, GE, GW

SUBJECT: CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF
THE BIERMANN AFFAIR

REF: (A) BERLIN 7163; (B) BERLIN 7141; (C) BERLIN 7174;
(D) BERLIN 7157; (E) BERLIN 7165

1. SUMMARY: THREE WEEKS AFTER THE BIERMANN EXPULSION,
SPECULATION CONTINUES ABOUT THE REASONS BEHIND THE SED
DECISION. WHILE SOME BELIEVE THAT THE EXPULSION RESULTED
FROM THE AFFINITY OF BIERMANN'S IDEAS TO THOSE OF EURO-
COMMUNISM, WE BELIEVE TWO FACTORS LED TO HIS EXPULSION:
THE CONTINUING EFFECTS OF HELSINKI IN THE GDR AND
BIERMANN'S USE OF THE FRG AS A PLATFORM FOR HIS
CRITICISM OF THE GDR. THE SED HAS MARSHALLED SUPPORT FOR
ITS DECISION AMONG SOME WELL-KNOWN AND DEPENDABLE GDR
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ARTISTS WHILE PUTTING PRESSURE ON THE PROMINENT ARTISTS

WHO SIGNED THE PETITION OF SUPPORT FOR BIERMANN. SED CONCERN WITH CONTROLLING DOMESTIC REACTION TO THE BIERMANN OUSTER IS EVIDENT BUT WE DOUBT ANY INTENTION AT THE PRESENT TIME TO CRACK DOWN HARD ON PROMINENT SUPPORTERS OF BIERMANN. LESSER-KNOWN FIGURES ARE BEING HARRASSED, HOWEVER. OVER THE LONGER RUN, WE EXPECT GDR ARTISTS TO EXERCISE CONSIDERABLE SELF-DISCIPLINE IN THEIR WRITINGS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS, PRIMARILY THOSE WHICH THEY PUBLISH OR EXPRESS IN THE FRG. THE BIERMANN OUSTER, HOWEVER, DOES NOT NECESSARILY AUGUR NEW RESTRICTIONS ON WRITERS EXPRESSING THEIR IDEAS THROUGH ACCEPTABLE CHANNELS IN THE GDR. AT THE SAME TIME, THE SED WILL CLOSELY WEIGH ITS ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ARTISTS FOR EFFECTS UPON ITS RELATIONS WITH THE FRG. END SUMMARYM

2. THREE WEEKS AFTER THE SED ANNOUNCED IT WAS DEPRIVING POET-SINGER WOLF BIERMANN OF HIS GDR CITIZENSHIP, SPECULATION CONTINUES ABOUT THE REASONS FOR THE ACTION AS WELL AS OVER THE LONGER-TERM DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL EFFECTS OF THAT DECISION. THE FRG MEDIA CAMPAIGN IN SUPPORT OF BIERMANN HAS SUBSIDED; THE SED HAS ISOLATED (THROUGH HOUSE ARREST) WELL-KNOWN DISSIDENT ROBERT HAVEMANN; AND IT APPEARS THAT THE ARTISTS WHO SIGNED (OR WHO LATER BECAME ASSOCIATED WITH) A PETITION ASKING THE SED TO RECONSIDER THE BIERMANN DECISION, ARE THE SUBJECTS OF MILD TO HEAVY PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE.

3. BIERMANN'S INFLUENCE IN THE GDR, MINIMAL BEFORE THE GDR SURPRISINGLY GRANTED HIM PERMISSION TO VISIT THE FRG, WAS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY INCREASED BY THE SED'S ACTION. NOW, HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE MENTION OF BIERMANN IN THE WESTERN MEDIA AND NONE AT ALL IN THE GDR PRESS AND TELEVISION. BIERMANN'S OWN THEORY OF THE REASON FOR HIS OUSTER, THAT HIS IDEAS HAVE ENOUGH IN COMMON WITH EURO-COMMUNISM TO HAVE BECOME DANGEROUS TO THE SED, DOES NOT SEEM TO BE WELL-FOUNDED. WHILE EURO-COMMUNISM HAS UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN A MUCH DISCUSSED TOPIC AMONG GDR INTELLIGENTSIA, THESE IDEAS ARE A LONG-TERM PROBLEM FOR THE GDR, NOT AN IMMEDIATE ONE WHICH CAN EXPLAIN THE SED'S ACTION AGAINST BIERMANN. CONFIDENTIAL

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4. WE BELIEVE TWO FACTORS MOVED THE SED TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF BIERMANN: 1) THE CONTINUING EFFECTS OF HELSINKI IN THE GDR, MOST NOTICEABLE IN THE DISTURBING (TO THE SED) INCREASE IN APPLICATIONS BY GDR CITIZENS TO EMIGRATE TO THE FRG; AND 2) THE WELL-KNOWN UNDERMINING INFLUENCE OF FRG MEDIA IN THE GDR. IT MAY BE THAT THE SED FEELS THAT FRG MEDIA HAVE EXACERBATED A

MOOD OF INCREASED DISSATISFACTION BY PUBLICIZING
BIERMANN'S PLIGHT. IF THIS IS SO, BIERMANN'S TRANS-
GRESSION LIES NOT SO MUCH IN WHAT HE SAID AS IN THE
FACT THAT HE CHOSE AN FRG FORUM IN WHICH TO SAY IT.
WE BELIEVE THE BIERMANN AFFAIR TO BE A WARNING TO THE
GDR CULTURAL WORLD WHICH, LIKE BIERMANN AND HAVEMANN,
HAVE CRITICIZED THE GDR THROUGH THE FRG.

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5. A WEEK AFTER THE BIERMANN DECISION WAS ANNOUNCED,
THE SED MARSHALLED THE SUPPORT OF MANY WELL-KNOWN GDR
ARTISTS BEHIND ITS DECISION TO EXPEL BIERMANN. SHORTLY
THEREAFTER, ON NOVEMBER 26, THE SED BERLIN DISTRICT
ORGANIZATION OF THE GDR WRITERS' ASSOCIATION PASSED A
DECLARATION SUPPORTING THE SED'S ACTION AND CRITICIZING
SEVEN OF ITS MEMBERS BY NAME WHO HAD SIGNED THE PRO-
BIERMANN PETITION. AT THE SAME TIME, A FRIEND OF
BIERMANN'S AND HAVEMANN'S, WRITER JURGEN FUCHS, WHO
HAD BEEN ARRESTED, HAS BEEN RELEASED. WHILE SEEMINGLY

MILD PRESSURE HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THE PETITION SIGNERS, OTHER LESSER-KNOWN CULTURAL FIGURES (WHO LATER BECAME ASSOCIATED WITH THE PETITION) HAVE BEEN HARRASSED AND A FEW HAVE BEEN ARRESTED.

6. WE BELEIVE THE SED CONTINUES TO BE CONCERNED OVER DOMESTIC REACTION AND SAW IN THE BIERMANN DECISION AN CONFIDENTIAL

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OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF SOMEONE WHO THEY WISHED TO GET RID OF IN ANY CASE. BIERMANN'S APPEARANCE AT A CHURCH CONCERT, ATTENDED MAINLY BY YOUTH, IN PRENZLAU IN SEPTEMBER 1976 AND HIS ASSOCIATION THEREBY WITH A CHURCH GROUP AT A TIME OF GREAT SENSITIVITY FOR THE SED (PASTOR BRUESEWITZ'S SELF-IMMOLATION) IN ALL LIKELIHOOD ASSISTED THE SED TO DECIDE TO EXPEL BIERMANN.

7. IN RETROSPECT, THE ARTISTS' PETITION CAN BE SEEN TO HAVE BEEN: A) AN APPEAL AGAINST AN ACTION WHICH THE ARTISTS CONSIDERED TO BE TOO HARSH AND A CHALLENGE TO THE PRINCIPLE OF MEASURED OR ACCEPTABLE CRITICISM WITHIN THE SYSTEM: B) AN EXPRESSION OF CONCERN BY THE ARTISTS IN THEIR OWN ABILITY TO TRAVEL ABROAD; AND C) A SYMPATHECTIC REACTION IN SUPPORT OF A FELLOW ARTIST. BY THE ARTISTS' OWN STANDARDS, BIERMANN'S LOSS OF NATIONALITY AND EXCLUSION FROM THE GDR WAS AS HARSH A SENTENCE AS HE COULD HAVE RECEIVED SHORT OF IMPRISONMENT. THE LESSON SEEM TO BE THAT CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INTERNAL CRITICISM WILL BE TOLERATED BUT CRITICISM DURING VISITS TO THE FRG WILL NOT BE. SINCE NONE OF THE AFFECTED ARTISTS HAS OPENLY EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO EMIGRATE THE GDR TO THE FRG, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THEY WILL IN TIME SUCCUMB TO THE SED'S PRESSURE.

8. OVER THE SHORT-RUN WE EXPECT THE SED TO TRY TO DAMP DOWN ANY DOMESTIC UNREST OVER THE BIERMANN AFFAIR BY CONTINUING TO PUT PRESSURE ON PROMINENT GDR WRITERS TO ACCEPT THE PARTY'S POSITION. THE SED WILL ALSO CONTINUE TO MONITOR CLOSELY THE ACTIVITIES OF LESSER-KNOWN FIGURES IN SUPPORT OF FREER EXPRESSION. THE SED IS AIDED IN THIS ENDEAVOR BY LARGE-SCALE PUBLIC APATHY TO THE CASE AND BY DWINDLING FRG MEDIA ATTENTION. THE ARTISTS WIL MAINTAIN A LOW PROFIEL AND SOME, LIKE WELL-KNOWN WRITER STEFAN HEYM, WILL NOT TRY TO LEAVE THE GDR UNTIL THE SED'S ATTITUDE ON TRAVEL AND RETURN TO THE GDR IS CLARIFIED.

9. WE BELIEVE THE LONGER-TERM EFFECTS ON THE GDR WILL BE:

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A) INTERNAL: ON THE CULTURAL SCENE, WE EXPECT GDR ARTISTS TO EXERCISE CONSIDERABLE SELF-DISCIPLINE IN THEIR COMMENTS AND WRITING ABOUT GDR SOCIETY IN ORDER TO AVOID MORE STRINGENT MEASURES BEING IMPOSED. NEW THEMES IN LITERATURE WILL BE CAREFULLY VETTED BY THE SED.

B) EXTERNAL: THE SED WILL BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO ANY FRG CRITICISM OVER THE BIERMANN AFFAIR(AT BELGRADE OR ELSEWHERE) BY ATTACKING " REACTIONARY" FORCES IN THE FRG FOR MIXING IN GDR INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

C) FRG/GDR RELATIONS: THE SED WILL BE PREPARED TO ALLOW THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FRG TO CONTINUE AT THE CURRENT LOW-RATE OF DEVELOPMENT. THEY WILL NOT TRY TO RESTRICT VISITS FROM THE FRG UNDER THE 1972 AGREEMENT. THE SED WILL BEAR IN MIND DURING THIS PERIOD THE EFFECT WHICH ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD ITS RESIDENT INTELLECTUALS MAY HAVE UPON THE GDR'S POSITION AT BELGRADE.
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